

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 IO-13 SSM-03 CIAE-00
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P R 041427Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2955
AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USMISSION USUN
USMISSION SINAI

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E.O.11652: N/A
TAGS: IS, EG
SUBJ: ISRAELI REACTION TO SADAT'S POST MAY DAY SPEECH

1. ISRAELIS HAD HALF EXPECTED SOME DRAMATIC NEW ANNOUNCE-
MENT TO EMERGE FROM SADAT'S MUCH HERALDED POST-MAY-DAY
SPEECH AND WERE THUS PARTLY DISAPPOINTED THAT HIS BASIC
HARDLINE CONDITIONS FOR PEACE REMAINED THE SAME. AT THE
SAME TIME THEY EXPRESSED RELIEF OVER SADAT'S REASSER-
TION OF HIS COMMITMENT TO CONTINUING PEACE EFFORTS. FOR
THE REST THEY THOUGHT THAT THE SPEECH BY ITSELF WOULD DO
LITTLE TO ENCOURAGE EARLY RESUMPTION OF
NEGOTIATIONS, AND
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INTEREST WAS LOST AS PUBLIC ATTENTION WAS DIVERTED BY MORE
DRAMATIC NEWS OF UNIFIL-PALESTINIAN CLASHES IN LEBANON.
PERSONS QUERIED ABOUT THEIR REACTION SAID THAT THE
QUICK DECLINE OF PUBLIC INTEREST IN SADAT'S SPEECH MAY
ALSO HAVE BEEN DUE TO THE FACT THAT IT HAD BEEN PRIN-
CIPALLY DIRECTED TOWARD INTERNAL, DO-
MESTIC PROBLEMS.

2. THE JERUSALEM POST SAW SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SADAT'S LINE AND THE U.S. POSITION (E.G. ON TOTAL WITHDRAWAL AND AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE) DESPITE SADAT'S IMPLYING SIMILARITY, IF NOT IDENTITY, OF VIEWS WITH WASHINGTON, WORLD OPINION AND EVEN THE ISRAELI RESERVE OFFICERS AND UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS. COMMENTATORS NOTED THE ABSENCE OF ANY FLEXIBILITY ON THE QUESTION OF WEST BANK BORDERS OR PALESTINIAN SELF-DETERMINATION IN CONTRAST TO THE NEW MODERATION RECENTLY IMPUTED TO SADAT ON THESE ISSUES. LIKUD MK ZALMAN SHOVAL SEIZED UPON SADAT'S APPROVING REFERENCES TO ISRAELI DISSENTERS TO ATTACK PEACE NOW SUPPORTERS AS AIDING THE ENEMY.

3. COLUMNISTS EXPLAINED MUCH OF THE SPEECH BY REMINDING READERS THAT SADAT WAS ADDRESSING SEVERAL AUDIENCES SIMULTANEOUSLY. AS A SIGN OF WHICH SUBJECTS COVERED BY SADAT INTERESTED EGYPTIANS THE MOST, THEY NOTED THAT HE DREW HIS BIGGEST APPLAUSE AT THE END WHEN HE ANNOUNCED A TEN-DAY PAY BONUS. THE NRP DAILY, HATZOFEH, COMMENTED: "SADAT'S SPEECH MUST BE SEEN AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF INTERNAL FERMENTATION THAT IS GROWING IN EGYPT. SADAT'S HISTORICAL VISIT TO JERUSALEM TEMPORARILY PUSHED THE INTERNAL PROBLEMS INTO A CORNER WHILE RAISING SADAT'S PRESTIGE BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS. HOWEVER, THE FACT THAT HIS PEACE INITIATIVE GOT STUCK IN THE MD HAS ALLOWED THE UGLY ECONOMIC SITUATION TO REAR ITS HEAD TOGETHER WITH THE ACT-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IVITY OF THE OPPOSITION. SADAT'S SPEECH WAS DIRECTED BOTH TOWARDS THE EGYPTIANS FOR HOME CONSUMPTION AND TOWARDS THE U.S. EVIDENTLY HE HOPES THAT BY SALVAGING THE POLITICAL SITUATION FROM DEADLOCK HE WILL FIND IT EASIER TO SUPPRESS THE INTERNAL FERMENT AND GENERAL DISSATISFACTION IN HIS OWN COUNTRY."

4. SEVERAL KNESSET MEMBERS QUERIED BY THE EMBASSY SEEMED TO TAKE THEIR CUES FROM THE EDITORIAL COMMENTS AND CONFIRMED THAT THE SPEECH HAD BEEN NOTED ONLY IN PASSING. ORIGINALLY THERE HAD BEEN SOME ANXIETY THAT SADAT WOULD TRY TO PUT NEW PRESSURE ON ISRAEL BY THREATENING TO RESIGN, BREAKOFF DISCUSSIONS WITH ISRAEL, OR EVEN TURN AWAY FROM THE U.S. SINCE THIS HAD NOT HAPPENED AND SINCE HE DID NOT BREAK ANY NEW GROUND IN TERMS OF OFFERING A NEW AND MORE FLEXIBLE BASE FOR NEGOTIATIONS, PUBLIC AND KNESSET INTERESTS WERE QUICKLY DIVERTED TO OTHER ISSUES.
LEWIS

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